



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Lyme Disease

What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is an infection caused by a bacterium known as *Borrelia burgdorferi*.

How is Lyme disease spread?

The bacterium lives in mice, squirrels and other small animals. It is spread among these animals – and to humans – through the bites of some ticks that are infected. In the northeastern and north-central United States, the black-legged tick (or deer tick), *Ixodes scapularis*, transmits Lyme disease. Young ticks can be as small as a pinhead, and the adults are only slightly larger.

Who is at risk for Lyme disease?

People who live, travel, or work in areas that may be infested with ticks.

How do I know if I have Lyme disease?

See your doctor. Be sure to inform your doctor if you have been bitten by a tick or have been exposed to tick infested areas.

What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

About 80% of the people treated for Lyme disease have a skin rash that appears within 3-32 days after the bite of an infected tick. The rash begins as a small red area at the site of the bite that gradually enlarges, leaving a clear center with a swollen outer ring (bull's eye rash). Flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, headache, muscle and joint pain, swollen lymph nodes, and stiff neck may accompany the rash. If left untreated, Lyme disease may lead to joint, heart and nervous system problems.

How is Lyme disease treated?

Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics. Symptoms of Lyme disease may continue even after appropriate treatment.

How Lyme disease is prevented?

Preventing the attachment and feeding of ticks through personal protection measures can prevent Lyme disease.

- Wear light colored long pants with cuffs tucked into socks and long sleeves when walking in grassy or wooded areas. It is easier to see ticks on light-colored clothing.
- Put insect repellent containing DEET on clothes, socks, shoes, and exposed skin.
- Permethrin (Permanone) can be used to treat clothes and shoes but should not be applied directly to skin.
- Check every 2 hours for ticks on clothes or exposed skin.
- After returning from the grassy or wooded area, brush off clothing and body. Inspect clothes and body for ticks, particularly in the areas of the groin, back of neck and knees, and armpits. Take a hot shower and wash clothing in hot water.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/>

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